
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

SSB 5166

Brief Description: Concerning the management of forage fish resources.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Rolfes, Ranker and Hasegawa).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Commissions two studies regarding the populations in Puget Sound of smelt and other forage fish.

Hearing Date: 3/12/15

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

According to the forage fish management plan developed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), forage fish are small, schooling fish which serve as a food source for other fish species, birds, and marine mammals. Examples of forage fish species are herring, smelt, anchovy, and sardine.

There are both commercial and recreational fisheries that target forage fish. Although most recreational fishing in Washington requires a license from the WDFW, including recreational fishing for most forage fish, there is an exemption for smelt. A recreational fisher may catch smelt without a license.

A person must obtain approval from the WDFW prior to commencing any construction project that will use, divert, obstruct, or change the natural flow or bed of any of the salt or fresh waters of the state. Hydraulic project approvals are issued by the WDFW to ensure the proper

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

protection of fish life and may be denied or conditioned on beaches where forage fish spawning has been documented.

Summary of Bill:

Two studies are commissioned to be completed by the WDFW. The first study requires the WDFW to collaborate with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to survey the locations of surf smelt and sand lance spawning areas throughout the Puget Sound. This study, which may employ the Veterans Conservation Corps, must be used by the WDFW and the DNR to expand knowledge of documented spawning habitat areas in the Puget Sound.

The second study requires the WDFW to conduct a mid-water trawl at various depths throughout the Puget Sound to evaluate the prevalence of adult forage fish. The results of this study must be integrated into the existing Puget Sound ecosystem assessments.

Both surveys must be completed by June 30, 2017 and are subject to the availability of amounts specifically appropriated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.